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Hydrofracking Ban Opponent: Why It's "Flawed"

Joyce Gramza (2010-12-10)

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OSWEGO, NY (WRVO) - Governor David Paterson has until Monday, December 13, to decide whether to sign a bill to temporarily ban hydrofracking for natural gas in the state.

Opponents of the bill want Paterson to veto it, saying it's seriously flawed.

"People that passed this bill don't understand the issue, and I'm sorry, that's no disrespect to my colleagues in the legislature," says Assembly Republican Leader Brian Kolb (R-Canandaigua).

Kolb, who voted "no" on the moratorium, says many New Yorkers who supported it, didn't really understand what's in the legislation.

Kolb says there's no need to halt the type of fracking that concerns most people-- horizontal drilling using high volumes of water and chemicals-- because that's already not happening.

"There's no ability for that to happen right now, unless regulations are created to allow it to happen," he says.

Kolb says the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation is working to generate regulations not only on the drilling, but also on transportation, waste disposal, and other issues involved in the practice.

On the other hand, he says the bill also temporarily bans vertical drilling, which is regulated and has been allowed in the state for more than 50 years.

"This particular bill bans any new permits whatsoever, regardless if there's current regulations in place, from now until May (2011). And that's why it's a bad piece of legislation and should not be signed by the Governor," says Kolb.

Kolb says many people make emotional decisions when it comes to the environment. But he says the lesson of disasters like the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, should be to restrict the riskiest practices, not to say no to everything.

"This is a multi-billion dollar industry, especially for people in the Southern Tier," Kolb says. "It always maddens me when some environmentalists sitting in the comfort of their homes in downtown Manhattan think they know better what we should or should not be doing in the Southern Tier."

Kolb says that in 2009, close to 600 well permits were issued. "About 90 percent of those would be banned if this moratorium is signed into law," he says. He says that would mean thousands of jobs lost.

Kolb says that if hydrofracking were allowed, and more DEC staff were needed to police it, it's conceivable some jobs in that agency could be restored.

"There's a lot of opportunity to make sure funding is there if we do it right, and then do the right thing when it comes to budgeting and quit raiding dedicated funds and using them for other things that we can't afford to pay for," he says.

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